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511 Park Drive
Lebanon, Ky.
January 25, 1983

Dear Folks,

The El Pasos have certainly had their share serious illnesses, what with Judi's bout with hepatitis, Aunt Jettie's glaucoma, and Uncle Joe's breathing problems. When it rains it very often pours. Glad to hear in a letter last week that the glaucoma has been checked by medication and that Uncle Joe is more comfortable with his bedside oxygen. Scott, I'm sure your Christmas visit helped cheer things up.

Our Christmas was quite pleasant, though a balmy 72° the 25th made it seem more like Easter (we'll probably have delayed Christmas weather for Easter). Audrey and Lusine, however, with their first bikes must have logged 50 miles each, riding up and down the driveway for hours on end. The next day Audrey wanted to know when the training wheels could come off.

Rob, at 12, has recently discovered comic books and was in seventh heaven when Jack presented him at Christmas with two cardboard boxes filled with his old comic books saved for 15-20 years and still in good condition. With his trusty comic book collection manual in hand, Rob at once spotted a Star Trek

first edition, ca. 1968. He spent several days calculating and tabulating his new-found wealth.

Bob hit the big four-0 milestone this month and is not yet convinced that life begins at 40. He took a similarly dim view of reaching 35 (something I get to experience in July). He disliked the idea of being lumped with the "35 and older" bunch found on all questionnaires, etc. From observation, however, I've found that many "35 + older" exhibit more *joie de vivre* than ^{those in} the 18-34 category.

Joe and new wife Celeste are expecting a baby near their first wedding anniversary in late July. At 31, Joe has done an about-face on the subject of children, always adamantly opposed to any of his own up to now. Celeste has brought about a number of alterations in staunch old Joe - all for the better in my opinion. We stand amazed - and enamoured of Celeste, who is an exceptionally warm and considerate person.

Jusie's dried flower wedding decorations sounded delightful. I plan to get back into flower-drying this summer now that I have more room for growing and storing. Already I'm laying off the rows in my mind for our garden, which will probably be started by the time this Robin migrates back to Kentucky in the spring.

Love,
Sylvia

511 Park Drive
Lebanon, Ky.
November 11, 1983

Dear Folks,

I am writing this from Bob's hospital room in Louisville. It has just been determined that he has hepatitis. The exhausting tests he's been subjected to all week have been almost worse than the ailment. Plenty serious itself, of course, hepatitis, as we are told requires at least 2 months' recuperation time. Tests show that Bob has type B, which is less contagious but takes longer for recovery. The children and I may have to take shots as a preventive measure.

There's not a clue as to how Bob could have contracted hepatitis. He has been pushing himself a great deal since June; summer school at Western Ky.

Renir. This summer was particularly rigorous, and ^{his} duties at school this fall have been unusually burdensome.

The children and I, however, are fine and expect to stay that way.

Pam, hope your ankle is repaired by now. You mentioned enjoying children's literature. When I first got my degree in library science I thought I would prefer elementary school because I dearly love children's books, particularly picture books, where good art abounds. My first job, however, happened to be ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ a high school where I work today. It wasn't long till I realized I preferred ~~the~~ working with high schoolers rather than young children.

I still keep up with children's literature, however, and am able to find ^{at our public library} nearly all the good, new children's titles to read to Audrey and Jessie. Rob, at nearly 13, usually prefers his own choices in books.

By the time this Bird alights here again I hope our hepatitis episode will be history.

Love,
Sylvia



copies sent to Will E. in Ohio, Joanna and Barb in Ludington, Emily in Minnesota, Jack in Missouri; Exs Sylvia in Lebanon, Celeste and Joe in Mammoth Cave, Jim Ed in Mississippi, Wilma Harman and Rena Thomas in Bowling Green. 12/20/83

The University of Texas at El Paso

December 17, 1983

817 University Avenue
El Paso, Texas 79902

JOSEPH M. RAY
President Emeritus

Letters from Vivian Jane Scott Ray to her mother, Nancy Eleanor Bunch and her twin sister, Iris, from Scottsville, Kentucky, to Bowling Green, Kentucky, May 24th, 1904.

Mama was born January 31, one of ^(IDENTICAL) twins, with Auntie (Iris), 1875. *** Married

in 1895 to Joe Ed Ray ^{***} Children: Ruby, born, March, 1896, now 8 years old; Virginia Scott, August, 1897, soon to be seven; Virgil Raymond, 1898, died in infancy, named for Virgil Scott, uncle; William Brown, December 8, 1899, four and a half, named for Father's

older brother, Dr. Willie Ray and Mother's older brother, Brown Scott; Amy Eleanor, born December 2, 1901, then two and a half, named for Grandma Nancy ^{CALLIS} ELEANOR Scott Bunch; Edward

Marshall, December 2, 1903, named for his Father's most commonly used given name and his deceased grandfather, John Marshall Scott, then nine days less than seven months; and, three

and a half years later ^{AFTER} ~~then~~ these letters, and two months after his Father's death, Joseph Malchus, October 14, 1907; got Papa's less used given name (Scott's fussed about two boys

named for their Ray father, but the new widow hung in there) and Malchus, suggested by

teenage, later Nashville doctor, Ray Callis Bunch, taken from the hero of a G. A. Henty boy's novel, THE CARTHAGINIAN. ^(KAMMERHALF BROTHER) *** JOE ED RAY, familiars called him Ed, but known far and wide

as Joe Ed. ^{***} Jim Ray, natural cousin, son of Papa's eldest sister, Alva, by a Kinchloe.

Papa as a very young man, went to the Kinchloe farm and found his sister working in the field for the "low down" Kinchloes, pregnant with Jim; brought her home to the Ray place; when Jim

was born, to rid themselves of the hateful Kinchloe name, Papa adopted him, and he lived his life as James McWhorter Ray, for grandpa Ray; ^{thus} Mama had an adopted son 10 or 12 years ^{old} when

she married Papa, probably living at this time with Grandpa. Jim was never a strong personality and never established a home of his own. He spent his last years in the Masonic Home

in Lexington. When I went for the summers ^{AGE} at 7 to 9 to the Old Ray Place, Jim lived there with Aunt Mollie and Uncle John Thaxton, working in the fields with Uncle John (two miles

out of Scottsville on the Durham Springs Road from Scottsville). Jim once mystified me mightily by quoting from the ~~WEIL~~, "The fornicators and adulterers ~~God~~ will judge."

(JOVER)

I didn't know what he was talking about until I got back to Bowling Green and a dictionary.

*** This is the first time I remember ever seeing Mama's handwriting and signature "Vivia." *** She blamed herself for ~~carelessness~~ carelessness in letting Baby Ed ~~get~~ burnt with hot coffee. *** Indeed, that wouldn't be the last time one of Joe Ed Ray's boys got burnt sticking his hands into something they didn't belong in. *** In writing her mama, Mama called her husband "Mr. Ray," my guess is because Grandma called him that. *** His business was brick and fire wood, and, as the letter tells, lime. Lime in those days was essential among poor folks to make whitewash. The old saying was of some folks, "Too poor to paint, and too proud to whitewash." *** She wanted to go from Scottsville to Bowling Green to visit her kin, but little Ed's burn postponed the trip. *** I never heard of Mrs. Haines, or Ruby Riherd, or the fortune-telling Marie. Uncle Virgil's elder daughter was Marie, but she was then five or six years old; she died four or five years ago in Deerfield Beach, Florida, past eighty, after having lost all her marbles. *** Mama could go to Bowling Green, leaving the five kids, or four of them, with Grandpa and Grandma Ray and the girls (or those of them still living in May, 1904). Judging from the affection showered on me there ten years later by Aunt Mollie, the daughters would have had a field day with those little kids, herded by their ever-competent big sister, Ruby. *** Grandpa and Grandma Ray got only one grandchild out of their daughters (Jim Ray), Alva (Alvie); Carrie (never married) Caroline; Margaret (Maggie, married ^{Jim} Smith and lived out her life in Glasgow, no children); Mary (Mollie, married John Thaxton, No children); and Lura, who died young. So I'm convinced all those women would have welcomed Joe Ed's brats and Uncle Willie's three, any time at all. *** She could get to Bowling Green by hack, a two horsespring wagon with long ~~cross~~ cross-wise seats, taking ten or twelve people. Ten years, or twelve, ^{LATER} Auntie (Iris) took me on it. The trip took all day, ^{COST \$2.00,} with a lunch break at Allen Springs (then flowing a real stream, dry as a bone the last I saw) for them as didn't bring along a brown paper bag. Jim Ray many times in my boyhood walked the 32 miles from the Ray place to 1232 Kenton Street, ^(TOO PROUD TO ASK IT) (Mama was always glad to see him) ^{AND AUNTIE, TOO.} *** Someone once asked Papa how he could tell Mama and Auntie, identical twins, apart; he responded, "It's easy; I just grab her and kiss her, if it's Iris, she claps me; if it's Vivia, she kisses me back." *** I shall be grateful for the rest of my days to Cousin Rena Thomas for saving this letter and a half through the years and for her generosity in sending it to me. Fest 1983 Christmas Present I could have got.

Joe Ray

Office Of
JOE ED RAY,
—Dealer In—
Brick and Fire Wood.

(1)

ROBIN FILES

Scottville, Ky.

May the 24 1902

Mrs of Annie E. Burch

Dear Mother

I will write you a few lines though don't know much to write. Mr Ray has burnt a little kiln and he is taking the time out today. I wanted to come down there this week but as I told I is the baby got burnt it looks like carelessness to let a baby like him get burnt he was sitting in the high chair at the table and reached over and pulled the cup of hot coffee in him. it made a right bad blister on his hand and arm.

(2)

Scottville, Ky.,

1902

I will have to stop and
finish up dinner.

and then I will write a
little more I want to
write some to J. M. Ray.
We will all have
and company this evening
Mrs Haines has been here
you dont know her but
Iris does hope you are
well. I miss you have a lot
of little chicks. This is such a
warm evening. I am a
fraid it will be awful warm
next week. I want to come
about the last of the week.
dont look for me to much.
I will tell you all I know
when I come, and that wont
be much hope to see you all.

(1)

Scottville, Ky., May 24 1904

Miss Iris Scott—

Bowling Green,

Dear Sister

I will now write you a few lines as Marie has told your fortune. I wanted to come down there this week but dont guess will get to come now. The baby pulled a cup of hot

coffee over on his hand and arm, and burnt it right bad. though it is doing as well as it can guess I will have to wait until next week I intended to write you a long letter Sunday, but Ralby Rihard came up here and begged me to go down.

12-29-83

Dear Uncle Joe & Aunt Lettie,

Here are some pictures of the future homestead that we promised. They were taken in the middle of the worse drought in 50 yrs. You can't tell it from the picture but most of the leaves are drooping.

This cabin was originally built 2 yrs after the civil war. It's made of 20 ft and 18 ft long red oak logs that were hand hewn.

To raise the logs I stretched a $\frac{3}{8}$ inch cable between two trees and anchored the ends. I attached a block and tackle system to the 25' high cable, raised the logs, and rolled the suspended log into place. A friend and I raised the whole cabin in three days by this method. The top beams weighed about 1000 pounds apiece!

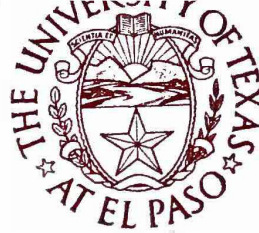
The roof is mostly my creation. I had help with six rafters and the rest I did by myself. The deck, which is 20 ft. high, looks out over a small waterfall.

The logs are all chinked now and the house has a different look. This weekend I plan to bring down the flooring for the 2nd floor - that is if the weather permits. I hope you all are not getting the bad weather we are. Love, Joe









THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

JOSEPH M. RAY

Professor Emeritus

President Emeritus

ADDENDUM TO SYLVIA:

I think Mama, your grandma, did some sewing for the seamstress at home on her own machine; she was a good one -- seamstress, that is. I remember a little black short pants suit she made for me that I wore to school in first grade. One of the ^{few} things I remember about Mama: (I never wore my good clothes out of school) I had come home from school and put on my old clothes and roamed down the street four doors to a house where there was a pretty little girl visiting; I rushed home and put on my pretty black suit to go back to play with the little visiting girl, and Mama laughed fit to be tied at me, but let me go ahead, after she hugged me. That would have had to be in Mama's last year. The suit had a little black cap, with a bill, and I was wondrously proud of it. I remember one time way back when Mama ran a sewing machine needle/a finger beside the nail; I have lost all details, but it must have been terribly painful.

PO I write weekly ~~to~~ a joint letter to Louise Richards and Lucille Scott in their vigil at Lovin's bedside. The incidental wind that has blown good about Lovin's stroke is that Lucille and ~~PO~~ Louise are friends again, I think because they both love

Lovin and are together at his bedside in the nursing home; also Beth and Rena have called off the hateful feud with Louise and are sisters again.

Don't lose sleep about Lucille's blighted sex life; to be sure, she was hung up on both her parents; they were both so intense about their lonely chick. Once when I was visiting in Nashville with Uncle Ray Bunch, he told me about a recent visit Uncle Jim (Lucille's papa) paid him on the way to North Carolina where Lucille was teaching and carrying on with a ^{ing}.

North Carolina teaching contract to the contrary notwithstanding, married man, to get Lucille and bring her home. "I told him,"

Uncle Ray told me, "that he should leave her alone, since at

38, she was old enough to know what she was doing; but he

wouldn't listen to me." He went to North Carolina and uncere-

moniously kidnapped his daughter and brought her home. Years

later, when we lived on Twentieth Street ^{IN WASHINGTON} (where Audrey and W. B.

came on their honeymoon) Lucille was ^{THERE} on her own working for the

FBI, man-crazy; once an eligible male came to see her; and

she (disgustingly healthy) took a week of bogus sick leave

to stay in her apartment with him the whole time. She didn't

marry because nobody she would have would have her. The trouble

between her and Louise was her fanning around Lovin at 70.

Don't listen too closely to Lucille's moans. Her parents left

her hundreds of thousands of dollars. I love her, but she's

pretty much of a fraud.

Love again,

Uncle Joe